

# Signs and Symptoms of Drug/Alcohol Abuse

Any one of the following behaviors can be a symptom of normal adolescence. When these behaviors pile up and you see changes in your child, however, you have reason for concern. Parental instincts can be a valuable guide. Here are some signs and symptoms to watch for.

## Personality Changes

- Less caring and involvement at home
- Lack of motivation
- Frequent irritability
- Periods of paranoia due to “dual life”
- “I don’t care” attitude
- Unexplained mood swings

## Physical Evidence

- Eye drops (Visine, Murine, etc.)
- Mouthwash or breath sprays
- Cigarette rolling papers
- Roach clips (device used to hold end of marijuana joint)
- Bong (glass tube structure for smoking pot)
- Pipes and small screens (about the size of a nickel)
- Seeds (from marijuana plants)
- Burning incense/using room deodorizers
- Baggies
- Stash Cans often disguised as cans of beer, cola, or even Chapstick
- Drawings of marijuana leaves on t-shirts or belt buckles
- Non-prescription pills such as No Doz or Vivarin (to pick them up after using depressants)

## Physical Changes

- Dilated pupils of eyes
- Weight loss, pale face, circles under eyes
- Unkempt appearance
- Changes in grooming habits
- Red eyes (or frequent use of eye drops)
- Change in choice of clothing
- Wearing long-sleeved clothing in hot weather
- Unexplained skin rashes, increased acne
- Persistent cough, frequent colds, low resistance to illness
- Runny nose, eczema around the nose
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Changes in eating patterns

## Behavioral Changes

- School attendance problems
- Drop in grades
- Increased need for money
- Parents may notice money or negotiable articles missing from home
- Quitting or getting fired from job
- New friends with no last names, no contact with parents
- Lying, secretiveness, con-games
- Mysterious phone calls – all part of “dual life”
- Inability to concentrate
- Spending more time in room or away from home
- Verbal and physical abuse toward parents, siblings, property
- Tantrums over seemingly minor issues

